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ABSTRACT

Four theoretical approaches to moral/citizenship education are described and compared. Positive and negative aspects of the cognitive-decision, developmental, prosocial, and values approaches are discussed and ways of relating the four approaches to each other are suggested. The first approach, cognitive-decision, is distinctive for its examination of the concept of practical reason. It includes claims about morality and offers a specific moral/civil theory based upon liberty, dignity, equality, and fairness. It maintains that the objective of moral/citizenship education is to instruct students in the nature of making moral and civic decisions. The second approach, developmental, favors a moral theory which maintains that there exists a set of sequential and irreversible moral stages through which human beings go and that students must be guided to higher stages until they reach rational autonomy. The third approach, the prosocial, stresses research on specific kinds of altruistic behavior and alteration of student behavior in a prosocial direction. The fourth approach, values, focuses upon helping students become aware of and act upon their values, although there is significant disagreement among proponents of this approach whether or not any set of values might be good or bad in a moral sense. References are included in the document. (Author/DB)

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THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO MORAL/CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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I

At the National Conference on Planning for Moral/Citizenship Education,[1] there was a remarkable emphasis given to the theoretical aspects of moral/citizenship education. The emphasis was given not to show respect to theorists in the field but to see if they have provided a foundation on which research and program planning in the area might rest. To this end the Conference discussed what it took to be four different theoretical approaches, which it labeled "Cognitive-Decision," "Developmental," "Prosocial," and "Values." The Conference concentrated on these 1) because of their impact (as measured by publications, research, and development of instructional materials) and 2) because of their being nonsectarian and, insofar, compatible with public education legal requirements.[2]

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The Cognitive-Decision Approach has its proponents mainly among philosophers, e.g., R.S. Peters,[3] John Wilson,[4] and Jerrold R. Coombs[5]; whereas the other theories have had their proponents among psychologists--the Developmental Approach being advocated by Lawrence Kohlberg and his associates,[6] the Prosocial Approach being

urged by Ervin Staub[7] and others, and the Values Approach being maintained by Louis E. Raths,[8] Milton Rokeach,[9] and others. The Conference, however, did not find that this split between philosophical and psychological authors created an intellectual chasm. After all, it observed that the Cognitive-Decision Approach has made some psychological claims and the other approaches have made some philosophical claims. Nevertheless, the Conference did not pretend that the four approaches do not have serious differences among themselves. While the Conference did not attempt to specify these differences, it did conclude that an issue for those concerned with the theoretical aspects of moral/citizenship education is to determine if and how the four approaches might be interrelated so that the strengths of one might complement the respective strengths of the others.[10] This was not the only issue which the Conference raised for those interested in the theoretical aspects of moral/citizenship education, but it was the one whose resolution would affect the answer to at least one of the other issues.

II

To locate the strengths, as well as the weaknesses, of the various approaches, one will do well to look at the general tenets of each of them. The Cognitive-Decision Approach includes certain claims about morality.[11] A moral act is a rationally justifiable

act. A rationally justified act is one determined by a rational decision, which is a decision that logically follows from a set of practical premises. A set of practical premises consists of statements of two sorts, factual and normative. Factual statements are descriptions or explanations of what exists while normative statements are either rules or principles. In this context a rule prescribes a specific course of action while a principle simply asserts a standard for justifying one or more rules.[12] How principles may be justified is not generally settled. Some philosophers argue that principles may be justified by the concept of self-interest[13] or that of action,[14] whereas others contend that principles may be justified by appeals to a way of life.[15] In any event, Cognitive-Decision theorists usually agree upon such principles as liberty, dignity, equality, and fairness.[16] According to the Cognitive-Decision Approach, then, the objective of moral/citizenship education is to instruct students in the nature of making moral/civil decisions, to help them learn how to discover and justify moral/civil principles and rules, to help develop in them a disposition to locate and consider facts related to possible actions, and to help engender in them the attitudes requisite for acting upon rational decisions. While learning to act rationally is not one and the same as citizenship education, it is central to such education in modern Western democracies.

For the Developmental Approach morality is profoundly, though not completely, concerned with thinking about what one should do. The courses of action which a person might entertain are contingent mainly upon his psychological equipment and the historical milieu in which he lives. The principles and rules which a person follows in deciding what to do are typically, if not always, products of the culture in which he lives. But the standpoint from which a person views a principle or rule--whether from the standpoint of self-interest, social authority, rational autonomy, or whatever--is a function of a social-psychological stage in which he is when he considers the principle or rule. A social-psychological stage shaping one's view of principles and rules is a moral stage. According to the Developmental Approach there is evidence which indicates that there is a set of sequential and irreversible moral stages through which human beings might go.[17] In the early stages principles and rules are looked upon from the position of self-interest; in the middle stages they are seen from the stance of social authority; and in the late stages they are regarded from the standpoint of rational autonomy. The members of some cultures develop no farther than the middle stages, but some members of other cultures do develop through the late stages. The task of moral education, consequently, is to guide a student from the moral stage in which he presently is to the next stage until he

has reached the highest development pertinent to him. In a modern Western democracy rational autonomy seems appropriate as an ideal, if not a realistic, goal of moral development.

Rather than relying upon a distinctive theory of morality or citizenship, the Prosocial Approach is concerned with only selected aspects of them; for it is primarily interested in prosocial behavior, i.e., any behavior that benefits another person.[18] Thus, it addresses behavior which is altruistic but not that which is significant for just oneself; and it speaks to impulsive, conscious-stricken, rational, and law-abiding behaviors only as they benefit second parties. While the Prosocial Approach is not concerned with all facets of morality and citizenship, it has undertaken empirical research highly pertinent to moral/citizenship education. It has investigated the prosocial importance of traditional socializing conditions, e.g., affection, reasoning, and modeling. It has inquired into the motivations of prosocial behavior. And it has explored the question of whether or not a person who behaves prosocially in given contexts will behave prosocially in other contexts. At any rate, an objective of moral/citizenship education, according to the Prosocial Approach, is to alter the behavior of students in a prosocial direction. This objective is agreeable to modern Western democracy although it is not especially relevant to it.

The Values Approach, by contrast, focuses upon what it takes to be the central fact of moral and civil life: values. Through and from his experiences, this approach claims, a human being normally acquires guides of his behavior. These guides may take the forms of purposes, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and other psychological factors; and they may be consciously held or not. For the Values Approach a value is any psychological factor of any person which tends to direct some of his behavior.[19] The proponents of the Values Approach noticeably disagree among themselves as to whether or not any value or any set of values of a person might be good or bad in a moral sense, but many of the proponents do agree that the set of values held by a person should be internally consistent. For the Values Approach the objective of moral/citizenship education is to help a student to become conscious of his values at a given time, to help him clarify whatever values he holds at a given point, and to prepare him to live deliberately and fully by the values which he has at a given moment. This purpose, though compatible with modern Western democracy, is not distinctively related to it.

The Cognitive-Decision Approach offers several advantages. 1) Through its careful analysis of justifiable action, this Approach offers a clarification of practical reason, which seems relevant to any comprehensive account of morality and which seems ingredient to standard accounts of citizenship in modern Western

democracies. 2) While the Cognitive-Decision Approach concentrates upon the concept of justifiable action, it does not separate the concept from other factors of morality; rather, it develops the concept as the keystone of a type of moral/civil theory, viz., one that centers around rational autonomy.[20] Thus, it provides those interested in moral/citizenship education a needed theoretical structure. 3) The educational proposals of the Cognitive-Decision Approach are likely to displease some members of the scholastic and political establishments; for, by emphasizing the place of reason within moral/citizenship education, they might be subject to charges of secularism and elitism. Nevertheless, the proposals are in keeping with the modern Western democratic tradition, which stresses the importance, in moral and civil affairs, of the individual's ability to act rationally. The proposals, then, are likely at least to make sense to the members of the scholastic and political establishments. Despite these advantages the Cognitive-Decision Approach has a pair of weaknesses. First, it has given but cursory attention to the moral development of students. It recognizes that children cannot act rationally in the way that adults can, and it recognizes that moral/citizenship education can be seen as a type of development. Even so, it has not formulated a set of moral developmental stages. Second, the Cognitive-Decision Approach has not adequately resolved the paradox of teaching morality. That is, it has not satisfactorily determined

whether or not the teaching o morality might have to involve an immoral method; or, more specifically, it has not determined whether or not the teaching of rational decision making must ever be accompanied or preceded by indoctrination, conditioning, or some other seemingly anti-rational method. Some proponents of the approach concede that some indoctrination or conditioning might be necessary at the beginning, but others argue against this modest concession.[21]

The most obvious strength of the Developmental Approach lies in its treatment of the moral development of the individual. It has delineated the various stages of such development and has clarified the major relationships among these stages. Furthermore, it has confirmed its formulation of the individual's moral development by widely recognized and accepted empirical research. As a result the Developmental Approach provides a theoretical framework which is of a kind pertinent to any serious discussion of moral/citizenship education and which, at the same time, has a grounding in fact. Another advantage of the Developmental Approach is that it explicitly links its view of individual moral development to a specific type of moral/civil theory and, thereby, furnishes another theoretical structure useful in examinations of moral/citizenship education. The kind of moral/civil theory upon which this approach depends is one taking rational autonomy as its

chief principle. Hence, it should be noted, the Developmental and the Cognitive-Decision Approaches share the same sort of moral/civil theory.[22] Finally, the Developmental Approach is attractive because its educational recommendations fall, as already indicated, within the tradition of modern Western democracy and, insofar, are likely to make sense to the scholastic and political establishments. Two flaws in this approach are notable. Although it relies heavily upon the concepts of reason and autonomy, it has not explained them as rigorously and fully as they might and should have been. Thus, one occasionally finds this approach's claims about rational autonomy to be somewhat questionable.[23] A second weak-spot is that the Developmental Approach also fails to resolve the paradox of teaching morality. It seems to be generally opposed to the employment of indoctrination, conditioning, propaganda, etc.; but it does not, as far as one can tell, make evident how students in the stages of social authority or of self-interest can be instructed without some pedagogical reliance upon some anti-rational methods.[24]

A strongpoint of the Prosocial Approach is its tendency to be specific. Rather than being concerned with moral behavior in general or with prosocial behavior in general, it dwells upon specific varieties of prosocial behavior, e.g., altruistic and conscientious behaviors. Thus, it offers those interested in moral/citizenship education conclusions which provide guidance in educating students

in specific types of behavior. A related advantage of the Prosocial Approach is that it has endeavored to base its investigations of prosocial behavior on facts obtained by rigorous empirical procedures. The claims which it offers, therefore, are about prosocial behavior as it is in fact, not just as it is in conception; and they are claims which may be accorded, at least initially, validity. Nevertheless, there are several difficulties in the Prosocial Approach. The first is that this approach does not employ a definite moral/civil theory. Because it does not make use of a specific moral/civil theory, it does not indicate the moral or political importance of prosocial behavior. Hence, it fails to show if such behavior is central to moral and political life or if it is just a major or minor good in such life. And it fails to determine whether or not there are any limits on the worth or rightness of prosocial behavior. Is slavish prosocial behavior just as good or correct as autonomous prosocial behavior? Also, because this approach does not involve a definite moral/civil theory, it does not enable those concerned with moral/citizenship education to see what behaviors other than prosocial ones should be fostered. The second difficulty with the Prosocial Approach is that it does not tie its subject matter to a theory of moral development. Indeed, the vast bulk of its research, which pertains to children, says little about stages of moral development. Because

it lacks a theory of moral development, it does not address certain questions. For instance, it does not address the question of whether or not one type of prosocial behavior is more or less important in one moral stage of life than another; and it does not speak to the question of whether or not a specific type of prosocial behavior in one moral stage of life is the same as it might be in another stage. The third difficulty is that the educational recommendations by the Prosocial Approach are appropriate to education in societies of various moral/civil traditions and, therefore, are not especially significant of modern Western democracy. Because they are not especially relevant to modern Western democracy, they fail to give guidance concerning this nation's moral/civil tradition.

The Values Approach has at least two commendable points. The more obvious one is that this approach proposes that educators help students become cognizant of their values. After all, intelligent moral and civic behavior presupposes that one is aware of the psychological factors influencing one's behavior. The other attractive point is that the Values Approach has contributed to the clarification of the so-called "process" of valuing; that is, it has helped explain what it means to act deliberately with respect to a set of values. One of the weaknesses of the Values Approach pertains to its treatment of its central concept: It

has not fully clarified its conception of value. While it has defined the term "value," it has not explored the logical implications of its definition of the term. For instance, it has not examined the possible moral commitments contained within the idea of a guide of behavior. If the values approach had been more careful and more nearly complete in its definition of "value," it would have been in a position to have a consensus in answering the question of whether or not a value may be judged good or bad; for it would have seen that a guide of behavior is necessarily good or bad depending upon its success and efficiency and depending, in addition, upon where it directs the given behavior. If, furthermore, the Values Approach had better defined "value" than it did, it would have been able to see that internal consistency is not the only appropriate standard for assessing a set of values. A thoroughgoing discussion of the idea of a guide of behavior would have had at least entertained the criteria of universalizability, comprehensiveness, human dignity, and equality. Another deficiency in the Values Approach is that it has not attempted to make use of a moral/civil theory; at most, it has leaned in the direction of individual relativity. Because this approach does not utilize a moral/civil theory, it is not able to recommend what educators should do once they have gotten their students' values clarified. Values clarification by itself is not enough

for moral/citizenship education. Al Capone and Adolph Hitler appear to have been cognizant of their respective sets of values; furthermore, they seem to have acted deliberately by their respective sets of values. It is dubious, however, that moral/citizenship education should turn out Al Capones and Adolph Hitlers. This leads to still another lack in the Values Approach. The educational proposals of this approach, being suitable to societies of different moral/civil traditions, do not specifically address modern Western democracy. Hence, they do not furnish direction bearing on this nation's moral/civil tradition.

III

It will be helpful to summarize the positive and negative points just made about the four theoretical approaches of concern. The Cognitive-Decision Approach, it will be remembered, provides a thorough examination of the concept of practical reason, which none of the other approaches seems to furnish. It offers a specific moral/civil theory. The same sort of theory is also presented by the Developmental Approach, but no distinctive type of moral/civil theory is stated by either the Prosocial or Values Approach. Finally, the proposals for moral/citizenship education made by the Cognitive-Decision Approach are obviously in keeping with the tenets of modern Western democracy. Similar proposals

have been made by the Developmental Approach, but the proposals made by the Prosocial and Values Approaches are not especially significant of modern Western democracy. In contrast with the other various approaches, the Developmental furnishes a well-formulated and empirically substantiated theory of moral develcpment; the Prosocial provides much research concentrated upon specific kinds of prosocial behavior; and the Values offers a notable body of research dealing with the psychological factors directing behavior, including the "process" of valuing.

In view of this summary one may suggest a way to relate the four approaches so that they complement each other. It seems plain that the Cognitive-Devision and the Developmental Approaches may be merged to their mutual benefit. The analysis of practical reason embedded in the Cognitive-Decision Approach will strengthen the formulation of rational autonomy found in the Developmental, whereas the discussion of and research into moral development by the Developmental Approach will bolster the desultory treatment of such development by the Cognitive-Decision Approach. Moreover, these two approaches share the same sort of moral/civil theory; and their respective proposals for moral/citizenship education seem largely compatible with one another. For convenience, a merger of these two approaches will be called "the Cognitive Developmental Approach."[25] It also appears evident that the Prosocial and Values Approaches may be utilized to contribute to the

Cognitive Developmental Approach. Certainly, the studies of prosocial behavior by the Prosocial theorists would be useful to the Cognitive Developmental Approach; and the work on values and the recommendations for value clarification by the Values theorists would be helpful to the Cognitive Developmental Approach.

There are prima facie grounds for assuming that the Cognitive Developmental Approach would be acceptable to the proponents of the Cognitive-Decision and the Developmental Approaches. Some advocates of the Cognitive-Decision Approach favorably refer to the investigations into moral development undertaken by those pursuing the Developmental Approach.[26] And whenever the proponents of the Developmental Approach appeal to a philosophical view of practical reason, they refer to one which may be found in the thinking of Cognitive-Decision theorists. Nevertheless, it should not be concluded that an acceptable marriage of the Cognitive-Decision and the Developmental Approaches can be made without certain adjustments by one or both of the parties. It has already been mentioned that neither the Cognitive-Decision theorists nor the Developmental theorists have satisfactorily resolved the paradox of teaching morality. And it should now be remarked that an adequate resolution of this paradox presupposes some modifications within the Cognitive-Decision and the Developmental Approaches. This paradox, of course, must be satisfactorily resolved whether the Cognitive-Decision and the Developmental Approaches are to be merged or not.

At any rate, it is suggested that in the future advocates of these two approaches re-examine their respective treatments of the paradox and that they jointly discuss their views on the matter.

If such advocates reach a sound conclusion on the paradox, they will do more than bring their two approaches closer together. They will also settle another issue which was raised by the National Conference on Planning for Moral/Citizenship Education, namely, the issue of indoctrination.[27] The members of the Conference were inclined to oppose the use of indoctrination in moral/citizenship education, but they were generally uncertain if it could be avoided and on what grounds it should be. Thus, a sound resolution of the paradox of teaching morality would settle the issue of indoctrination by providing a basis for ruling out indoctrination or, conceivably, by establishing a basis for including it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The Conference was held June 4-6, 1976, in Philadelphia, Pa. It was directed by Russell A. Hill and was supported by Research for Better Schools, Inc., in conjunction with the National Institute of Education.

2. Joan D. Wallace (Ed.), Selected Readings in Moral Education (Philadelphia, Pa.: Research for Better Schools, Inc., 1976), p. v.

3. R.S. Peters, Ethics and Education (Atlanta, Ga.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967).

4. John Wilson, Moral Education and the Curriculum (Oxford, Eng.: Pergamon Press, 1969).

5. Jerrold R. Coombs, "Objectives of Value Analysis"; in Values Education: Rationale, Strategies, and Procedures, ed. Lawrence E. Metcalf (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1971), pp. 1-28.

6. Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Education in the Schools: A Developmental View," The School Review, LXXIV (1966), 1-30.

7. Ervin Staub, The Development of Prosocial Behavior in Children (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Modular Publications, 1973).

8. Louis E. Raths, Exploring Moral Values (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Warren Schloat Productions, 1969).

9. Milton Rokeach, "Toward a Philosophy of Value Education"; in Values Education: Theory/Practice/Problems/Prospects, ed.

John Meyer et al. (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1975), pp. 117-126.

10. Joan D. Wallace (Ed.), Report on the National Conference on Planning for Moral/Citizenship Education (Philadelphia, Pa.: Research for Better Schools, Inc., 1976), pp. 28-29.

11. Cf. R.S. Peters, Psychology and Ethical Development (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 281-293.

12. Vid. Marcus G. Singer, "Moral Rules and Principles"; in Essays in Moral Philosophy, ed. A.I. Melden (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), pp. 160-197.

13. Cf. Robert G. Olson, The Morality of Self-Interest (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965).

14. Cf. Alan Gewirth, "The 'Is-Ought' Problem Resolved," Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, XLVII (1973-74), 34-61.

15. Cf. R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), esp. pp. 56-78.

16. Cf. Peters, Psychology and Ethical Development, op. cit., pp. 286-293.

17. Cf. Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Cognitive-Development Approach to Moral Education," Phi Delta Kappan, LVI (1975), esp. 670-671.

18. The definition comes from Ervin Staub, "The Development of Prosocial Behavior in Children"; in Selected Readings in Moral Education, ed. Joan D. Wallace, op. cit., p. 75.

19. Cf. L. Raths, M. Harmin, and S. Simon, Values and Teaching (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1966), p. 27.

20. Vid. Alan Gewirth, "Morality and Autonomy in Education"; in Educational Judgments: Papers in the Philosophy of Education, ed. James F. Doyle (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 33-45.

21. Cf. I.A. Snook (Ed.), Concepts of Indoctrination (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).

22. Cf. Kohlberg, "The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral Education," op. cit., pp. 672-673.

23. Consider this argument by Kohlberg, "The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral Education," op. cit., p. 673: "Why are decisions based on universal principles of justice better decisions? Because they are decisions on which all moral men could agree." The difficulty with the argument is that it leaves the concept of a moral man vague. Not knowing what is meant here by "moral men," one cannot tell that all moral men could agree with decisions based on universal principles of justice. From various references in his writings, Kohlberg seems to mean by a moral man what John Rawls does; but, if he does, he needs to show why this conception of a moral man is an acceptable one.

24. For a brief discussion of this point, vid. James E. McClellan, Philosophy of Education (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 152-154.

25. Kohlberg, of course, describes his own developmental position as "cognitive-developmental." He does not mean, however,

that his position is necessarily a blend of the Cognitive-Decision Approach and the Developmental Approach.

26. E.g., R.S. Peters, "Freedom and the Development of the Free Man"; in Educational Judgments, ed. James F. Doyle, op. cit., pp. 119-142.

27. Cf. Wallace, Report on the National Conference on Planning for Moral/Citizenship Education, op. cit., p. 24.